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ORNETTE COLEMAN

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ORNETTE COLEMAN ★ HENRY ROLLINS ★ ICE T ★ FRED FRITH
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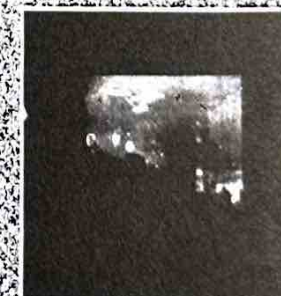
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Laura Schlactmeyer



SQUEEZE THE TRIGGER

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K: What do you think about the movie "Colors"? People say too much time was spent portraying the police instead of the gangs.

Ice: The movie was shot from the perspective of a cop. You only see what the cops see and that's the kid on the street. You don't know where they live or anything about their families. If you would have made the movie all about the gangs and the cops were downplayed, the movie would never have come out because people try to suppress anything about that. The film is basically very watered-down compared to the actual Los Angeles situation. It's like a shot of L.A. two years ago. If they would have really showed gangs they would have had to show something dramatically different. In other words, they didn't show the kids with gold medallions as big as dinner plates, with Benzes and Ferraris. They didn't show the dope dealers with big stacks of money. They didn't show the drug dealers that are winning out there. People who say the movie glorifies gangs are lucky I didn't make it. I'm doing a film now called "Squeeze the Trigger", but it'll be an underground film. It's done by a director, Andre Sherwood, in Detroit. It's really petro, like "Eraserhead", scary. I've got a shot where dudes get a Magnum stuck up to their eye and their head blows off and the back of their brain peels out in slow motion and it turns into a Cadillac rolling down the street, playing a rap tape. It's shot like the song, "Squeeze the Trigger."

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K: Did you read the Public Enemy interview about rap radio in the BRE (Black Radio Exclusive)?

Ice: Chuck D (of Public Enemy) has lots of valid points there. Black music now is basically about love, "I love you baby, I love you, I love you ..." And black people on the whole don't speak no more about nothing. Right now in America you've got Louis Farrakhan who speaks. He's opinionated, he's got his own attitudes but he's entitled to them, OK. You've got Jesse Jackson who's scared to speak because he's running for President. Everybody in America knows that Jesse Jackson isn't saying everything he wants to say. I heard a comedian say Jesse Jackson's liable to be at a press conference and he's going to say, "You see, and I feel those motherfu ...", and it's going to slip. But they've got people saying, "Don't say this, Jesse, don't say that." Even though he might be trying to do right, he's a puppet to some degree.

Q: He's a politician, and that's politics.

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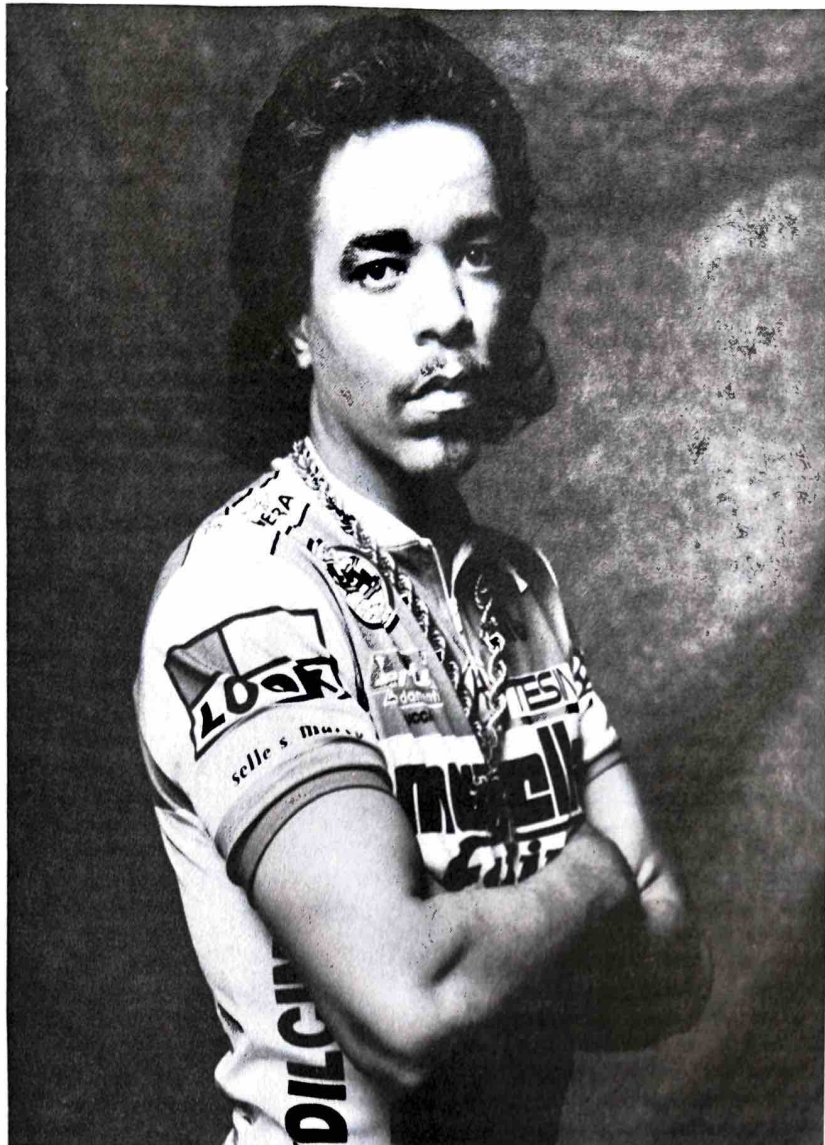
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CONTINUED

not as strong about their beliefs. So, a lot of black kids are in it for the money. I'm not saying that it's wrong, but some people got to stay down for what they believe in. I have the attitude about my music that regular radio could play me. They could bleep a word, but don't look to me to bleep a word. They bleeped Doug E. Fresh's "La Di Da Di" and played it. "Squeeze the Trigger", to me, that's like a heavy record. "Squeeze the Trigger" has one word — "goddamn". But it won't ever get played on regular radio because what I'm kickin' is too heavy. So this is a new form of censorship, but they'll always say, "But Ice T swears on his records."

K: That's what Lee Michaels (Program Director for WBMX) said about Public Enemy and there's no swearing on their record.

Q: There's no profanity. He said, "If they toned down their music, then maybe commercial radio would embrace them."

Ice: I've got a record coming out called "Radio Suckers Never Play Me": "Tone it down is what they say to me/The FCC will not allow profanity/The subject matter's too hard, make a love song/You better get real, come on/I ain't no lover, I'm a fighter/Hardcore radical rap rhyme writer/Pushin' the buttons, E. does the cuttin'/Everything I say amounts to something/More than a simple rap, I'm

too deep for that/I lay my lyrics with logic pressed to wax/Play it on your tape deck, feel the effect/If you can't take the heat, eject/But I know you can, 'cause you're an Ice T fan/No sellouts here, my man."

Now there's a lot of underground rap that's bullshit. For example Schoolly D. Schoolly D raps about the Parkside Killers (a Philadelphia street gang). He never justifies it. So what you've got with Schoolly D is someone who plays gangster and he just raps about his gang continuously, right? I know Schoolly D, I've done shows with Schoolly D, but I don't agree with his whole mentality. I feel you should have some kind of content in your music because if I say "Six in the Morning" and I don't at some time justify that record with "Pain", I could get some kids killed. In other words, back your shit. Now maybe Schoolly D doesn't have no responsibility. He feels he'll just kick the Parkside point of view. That's his opinion. I love Schoolly D, but I don't like being compared with Schoolly D. Compare me with Public Enemy or KRS One (of Boogie Down Productions).

K: What do you think about the new KRS One record?

Ice: I love KRS One because he talks science. The thing about the music is that kids understand a lot more than adults are willing to understand. An adult will hear my record and only hear [the profanity]. When kids hear it, they know what's up. They know

"Pimping Ain't Easy" doesn't have nothing to do with pimping a girl. They know what the words mean.

J: You said you have a new record coming out?

Ice: On the new album, "Power", my technique is to throw you in the totally wrong direction every time and then bring you back in. Like I used to do robbery, right. I've got a song called "Grand Larceny": "Stick up, hands in the air/You move, you lose, 'cause the Ice don't care/No chance to run, you don't shout/Flinch an inch, I'm gonna take you out/The grand larcenist, soloist, felonist, vocalist/Crime's my rhyme, but here's a new twist/I ain't here for your gold, bro/All we want is the show/This is grand larceny."

So it's about stealing shows. I have a way of taking the terminology of the gangsters and hustlers and turning it into my own thing. Kids listen to this.

J: We wanted to ask you about the show you did at the Regal Theater in Chicago. [The show was stopped by the theater management]

Ice: A lot of the time you've got people that promote shows that just want the money. They don't know what's going on. So what happens is, you're promoting a show and you ask your son, "Who should I get to make the money?" "Get Ice T." But you've got no idea what Ice T is about. Now what happened to me at the Regal happened to me at high schools too. High schools call me in and say, "Ice T, come do this fundraiser," and here I come with a 50-foot Uzi ... At the Regal, they said, "Cut down on the profanity. We're paying you for the show, but do you have to put that Uzi up over the stage? Do you have to wear that gun around your neck?" It's always like that. My attitude is, "Yo, you want us to do the show? Because we don't need the money." You've got to take the full dose because I know I'm not there for the wrong reason. My technique is breakin' these kids down to a level where they're going to listen to me. And if they think I'm a hustler or pimp or gangster, I've got their attention because they want to be that.

I know, I used to make crazy money hustling.

When I walked into a place in L.A., people would say, "There's Ice T," and it wasn't an Ice T, rapper, it was Ice T, the hustler. Then I went through a transformation. When I had a chance to rap, my boys said, you've got a chance. Really they meant all kids out there hustling deep down wish they could get a chance, and I had that chance. My buddies said, "You can do it, people like you, you can talk good, Ice, go ahead, do it." They gave me that motivation and I said, maybe, I don't know. Then I went for it. At the point I changed I went totally cold turkey. I didn't do nothing wrong. I went broke because I kept living at the speed of a hustler. Slowly I started making money and now I'm here.

The hustlers on the street are my people, they got me out of there. They're wrong for what they're doing, but I know why they're doing it. What I tell kids today is, fuck the police, do it for yourself. Don't do it for the cops or because they say it's wrong. Do it because you've got to live. Stay out of jail and live. As long as somebody's saying, "Don't do it," it's just like their parents. I'm giving them a new reasoning. I don't agree with the cops either, but stop, man, for yourself and live, brother, live. Because I didn't stop for the police. I wasn't scared of the cops. And I won when I was in the game. I stopped for myself and now rhyme pays. I have less money than I did before but I'm richer. Now I'm not infamous, I'm famous.

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WHAT AM I DOING HERE?

Henry Rollins has long been a stalwart in the American independent-alternative music and literature scene. He first made a name for himself as the lead singer in the thrash band Black Flag, whose stance and sound defined the "second wave" of American punk. By the album *Family Man*, he had already had many of his writings published, and offered a whole lp side of spoken word performance. Today, he's sold over twenty thousand copies of his seven published works, and made numerous spoken word appearances on both compilations and his own solo album, and performed nationwide and overseas with such other spoken word performers as Lydia Lunch and Ian Mackaye. WHPK's Mark Ferguson and Stephen Wessley spoke with him on his last trip to Chicago, before his appearance at the Cubby Bear.

Mark Ferguson: Why did you choose to record under the name Henrietta Collins?

Henry Rollins: Henrietta Collins? It's just a thing I'm doing. It's no big deal. It's just Henrietta Collins and the Wifebeating Childhaters. I hear Henrietta has another record coming out, probably in 1988. What I've heard in the press release is that it's supposedly the rap twelve inch to end all rap twelve inches. He has a new band, he's fired half his band. He's a Prince clone, Prince recently fired half his band, so he fired the whole band. And now he has Henrietta Collins and the Fearless Substance Abusers.

MF: Is there going to be another Henry Rollins Band album?

HR: Yeah, next week. It's called Life Time. Nine songs recorded digital, twenty four track in England, in November, 1987, produced by Ian Mackaye. And it's the full band: me, Andrew, Chris Haskett, and Sim Cain the same band that played all over last year.

Stephen Wessley: Is the rap single just an experiment, or is it something you'd like to go into?

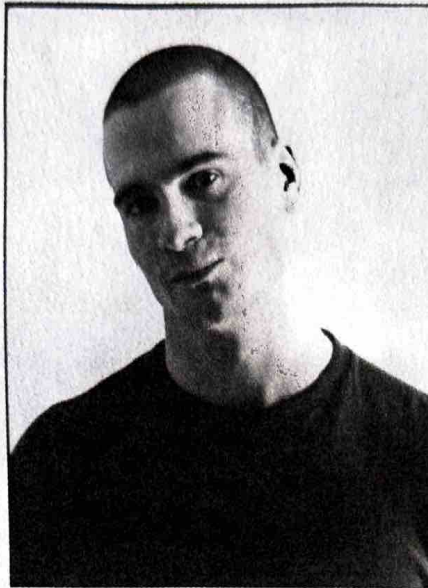
HR: Now fellas, I can't speak for Henrietta. I think we should just relax and see what that person has up his or her sleeve. If that record comes out, like I've read, there could be some interviews and live performances, we'll see.

MF: I read in one of your books that you'd made a movie with Lydia Lunch. Was that for Richard Kern?

HR: Yeah, we did that one, and we did another one, kind of a ten minute thing, which is basically me raping her and beating her up. That never came out, but I think it got shown at some art festivals or something. 'Cause it is art, you know, but we never really released it. I've never even seen it.

MF: Do you plan on getting involved in film in any larger extent?

HR: Yeah, I've got a movie I'm doing in August. It's called "No, Not One", and it's written by a guy named George, I forget his last name. He's a UCLA film grad, he's just a wise-ass guy with a lot of really great ideas. Last summer, in Chicago, I was sent a script he wrote, and I really liked it. And last October when I was in Holland he sent me another one, of this movie, and I read it and I thought it was great. He wanted me to be the lead in it, so I contacted him when I got home from Europe a few months



ago, and I told him I'd like to try it out, only I've never acted before. I'm not an actor, but he said "Hey, don't worry about it." So we got together and started working on this and that, and we're going to kick it live in August, when the band's on break.

MF: The band's going to go on tour then, to support the album?

HR: Yeah, I'll give you a rough overview of 1988. Right now, it's February, all of February is a reading tour, or talking tour, whatever it is. And that ends, and then the next day band practice begins, and that goes on for a month, and then the band hits the road for six weeks, ending up in Los Angeles. Then we're going to record all the new stuff we've got at that moment, and take a breather, then hit the road in early June, to go until about late July. Then the band goes and catches a tan, and I go do the movie. Then around September we take off for Europe to do about four to six weeks of major countries, major cities. Then I'll stay behind to do another spoken tour. Then I'll come home in November or December, and see how I feel then, might be a little out of breath the. I doubt it.

SW: Do you feel that your writing is influenced by your music and vice versa, or to what extent does someone like Bukowski who influences your writing affect your music?

HR: I'm influenced by everything I read, everything I see, everything I touch, everything I taste, everything I hear, everything I know, everything I'm afraid of, everything I hate, and everything I love. So I'm influenced by this right now. Books, definitely influenced by authors, by music. I get a lot of energy from other people's work. I'm a very excitable person.

MF: What was the last good record you listened to?

HR: Well I listen to a lot of good records. I just brought some stuff on tape with me for the long rides in the train. I brought three hours of Devo, the *Paris, Texas* soundtrack, "Hot Buttered Soul" by Isaac Hayes, some of the *Shaft* soundtrack, ninety minutes of ZZ Top, Ravel, Die Haut, an assorted

tape with the *Blue Velvet* soundtrack and the first Boston album on the other side. I know I'm blowing it. I listen to all kinds of stuff. Just before I left I bought a cd player, and I bought a couple of King Crimson cd's, "Starless and Bible Black" and "Red", and I was just cranking those everyday before I left.

MF: How many books have you had published?

HR: Five paperbacks and two limited editions.

MF: What's the total number of books you've sold?

HR: Over twenty thousand. We can't keep them in print, we're going to start printing up to five thousand of each one, just to keep up with demand.

MF: Have you ever been approached to write a script?

HR: The only thing I've ever been approached to script was "Don't Drink and Drive" public service announcements. A big advertising agency wants me to write some PSA's and then shoot me doing them and syndicate it all over America. But otherwise I don't get many offers of any kind, except for the band, and the reading thing. I don't have scripts being thrown through my window at every waking moment, I'm small change. I go about what I'm doing in a very, you might say, arrogant, tuinnel vision way. I don't like contributing to magazines, I did it and I found I don't want that. I don't aspire to be on Warner Bros. I don't want to be on Warner Bros., not that they want me, they don't know who I am. I don't want the mainstream, I don't want to be compromised in any way. That's the way I am and that's the way I'll always be. It's the way I was raised, with Black Flag and SST Records, never compromised, never took shit from anybody. We wanted this, and we did that. If anyone didn't like it we told them to fuck off, and that's still what I say. In that way I leave myself closed to a lot of opportunities by just going "Nope, don't want to do that."

MF: You say you don't like contributing to magazines. Didn't you just contribute a piece to *ReSearch*?

HR: That's different, because I really liked the idea. It wasn't like *Vogue* or *Option*, it wasn't like a magazine, it was a concept. Vail asked me, and I said "Sure I'll do it." It wasn't like he bugged my asshole with a microphone and got me telling a story in the bathroom or something.

MF: But they ran that letter in *Option*.

HR: Well I wrote that to Scott. If you look at the letterhead it says "Dear Option", well I wrote that to "Dear Scott". Every other month he sends me a magazine, and Verlaine was on the cover, who is a guy who really interests me, he's an amazing player. And the interview was so stupid. So I wrote him, like, "Hey Scott, what's the deal?", and he printed it with my face. Maybe he sold an extra copy with that.

SW: Do you feel travelling by train is an inconvenience?

HR: No, I like it. It's the only chance I get to read. I hate airplanes. I hate airplanes and I like the train because it goes where the highway doesn't, and you can see great parts of the country. Like going through Boca Raton Pass, the mountains, through

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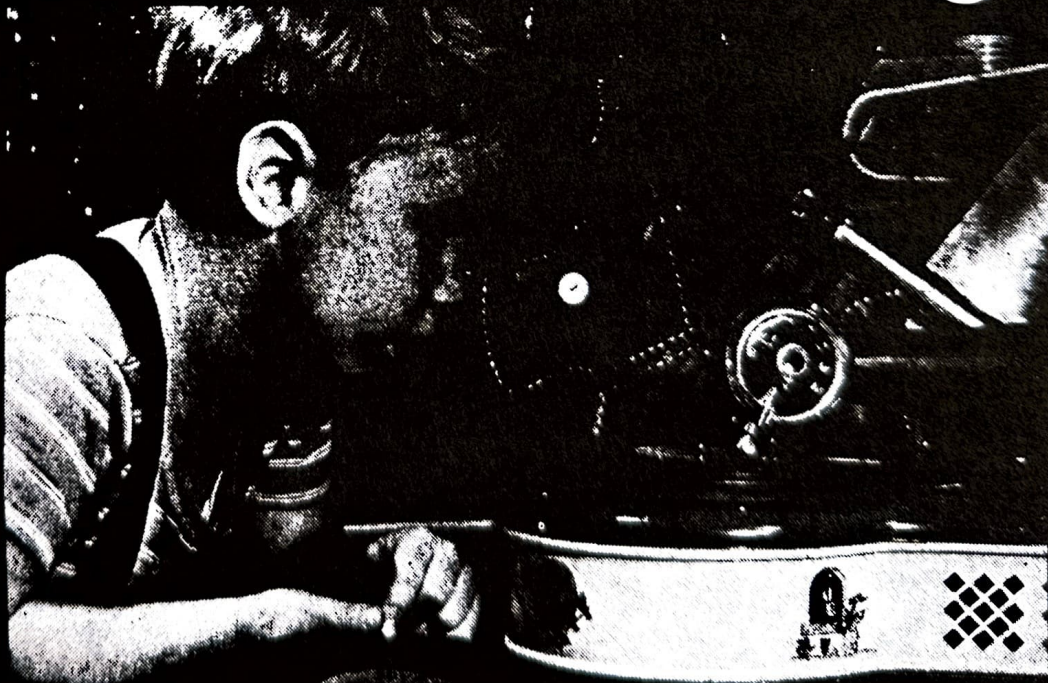
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THE PALACE OF LAUGHTER

Twenty years ago Fred Frith founded the seminal Art Rock/Jazz/Dada group, Henry Cow. In the time that has passed since their breakup, he has worked with such diverse groups as Massacre, with Bill Laswell; Skeleton Crew, with Tom Cora; and saxophonist John Zorn, in addition to numerous solo efforts released on Ralph Records. Although he is known primarily as a guitarist, his repertoire includes violin, bass, keyboards, and percussion as well. During the past few years, much of his time has been devoted to collaborative efforts in improvisational music with a great number of artists. Recently, WHPK's Tom Braden was afforded the opportunity to speak with him about his latest solo effort, "The Technology of Tears" a double LP length work based upon scores he wrote for dance and theatre productions, released on SST Records.

Tom Braden: This is the first album that you've put out under your own name in quite a while. (*The Technology of Tears*)

Fred Frith: Yes that's quite true.

TB: You seem to be a big proponent of collaboration with a lot of people.

FF: And I definitely will continue to be so. Every now and again something happens where there's a project which only I can do, and this was one of them.

TB: So you're in a situation where people come up to you and ask you for pieces?

FF: Yes, exactly. In all three cases: "Jigsaw", "The Technology of Tears", and "Propaganda" I was approached and commissioned to write something for a particular portion. So I went and did it, and when I'd done it, I was so happy with it I thought I'd put it out as a record.

TB: The first two are dance pieces, and the third is a multimedia sort of thing?

FF: Right, but more like theatre than multimedia, although it was not quite a traditional theatre piece and all that. You can tell there's a very strong difference between writing for theatre and writing for dance. It's a completely different function. A dance piece has to be more continuous really. But there's moments on the dance pieces when we used the device where the music stopped, but the dancer wouldn't, and there'd be periods of silence for about fifteen seconds. But on the recorded version I cut those out because it'd be a little strange.

TB: On "The Technology of Tears" you used a Synclavier, was that Henry Kaiser's?

FF: Yes it is. He bought that fairly recently and he invited me to check it out, so I did.

TB: Was that piece written for the Synclavier?

FF: Well, I only used the Synclavier on the third part of "The Technology of Tears". In this part, I mapped out the series of pulses, which became the structure of the piece. All the basic tracks, the rhythm tracks, were done on the Synclavier using samples of saxophones, strings, my voice, and drums basically.

TB: It also seemed like there were some samples of Tenko's voice.

FF: That was done later on, on a Mirage. I was very interested in the idea of transformation. I had her record for the sampling on the Mirage, then I had her sing certain melodies which I then repeated on the sampled keyboard. So I had both the

mechanical and the real version of the same tune, with the same sound. Then, when I mixed them together, I gradually moved from the real one to the fake one, so you get this feeling of somebody becoming mechanized, someone becoming robotic.

TB: It seems like there's a lot of that with "The Technology of Tears", because there's a lot of this contrapuntal writing with the live instruments and then there's this rhythm track that's really robotic, as you say.

FF: I like contrasts, especially now since a lot of music is being made in such a high tech way, but in a very sterile way. It's like everything that's being done with the new computer technology is so easy to do that nobody likes to put very much work into it to get a good result. And the process of everything, the process is really productive and fun.

TB: So you want these instruments to be more of a challenge rather than less of a challenge.

FF: And also I want them to put them into a perspective, I want you to be able to feel the kind of difference between the different technologies that are working. I enjoyed the fact, for example, that on the second part of "The Technology of Tears" I played the drums, and I'm no drummer. And you can hear that. The contrast of this kind of slightly clumsy drumming compared to the kind of strong but rigid drum machine of the first part is an interesting contrast.

TB: A lot of the people on "The Technology of Tears", Zorn, Tenko, and Christian Marclay are sort of known as improvising musicians. Are they improvising on this?

FF: Well, yes and no is the answer to that, and yes and no is the answer to the first part of that too. And let's not forget Jim Staley. But in this case, it was improvised, but very much according to what I suggested. When you're recording, especially when all the music is structured, obviously also, when you're improvising it's tempered entirely by what you're hearing on the tape. In John's case he played far more than is actually heard on the final recording, I tailored it to the needs of the piece. I would've liked to have kept more, but the choreographer wanted less, so we reached a compromise, because the whole process of working on that tape was a very close collaboration between Rosalind Newman and myself on every detail. The piece would not have sounded the way it did without her input, which was very important and good. I was very happy to have that, because I learned a lot from working with a non-musician, it was quite different for me.

TB: There's a piece that's some sort of a theme, there's a quote from it on the back of the record...

FF: The piece was written before the title, of course, which is usually the case. We had an idea for a piece, and the idea was pretty loose, I knew from watching the way that Rosalind was choreographing that there was a lot of anger in what was being done, and a lot of frustration. At the same time there was this feeling of helplessness, of being up against something. It was very kind of urban angst kind of stuff, and I suppose I was influenced by that in the direction of the piece. When we were looking for titles, I was reading this book of poems by this

Polish guy, whose poem is on the cover, and I came across this poem which I thought was a great title for the way the music felt. In fact, the poem doesn't have any direct bearing on the choreography at all, but when you take the music away from the choreography and just hear it on the record, I thought it was a very nice quotation. It somehow seemed to fit, but I can't tell you what the precise connection between what the words are and what the music is.

TB: A lot of people who hear your name, especially those who follow "alternative rock", seem to think of you primarily as a guitarist. On this record especially you play a lot of other instruments.

FF: Yeah, I shouldn't really worry about it. Sometimes I feel like I'm not being given enough credit as a guitar player so I kind of regress and call myself a guitarist for a few months. Then sometimes I think I'm not just a guitarist, so I'll regress and do just the opposite. It's just life, I do a lot of different things and I always have, and from that point of view nothing much has changed, if you listen to Art Bears records you'll find that I'm playing all of those instruments except the drums on those records. I really enjoy going into the studio and finding out what the right thing is to play, instead of just going in as a guitar player and trying to do everything on the guitar. When you're making a piece like this the guitar is not all that important, I used it very little. I probably played more bass and violin and certainly more keyboards.

TB: You seem to have gotten over your distaste for singing.

FF: Well, I don't know whether anyone else has, and that's the problem. I guess I've gotten used to reading reviews like "This record is more interesting than Frith's recent work, mainly because he doesn't sing on it." There are definitely people who dislike my singing out there. But if I need to use my voice I'll use it. I'm not a singer, I don't claim to be one, but I can make a sound that might work in a given context, and that's all that I can do.

TB: This is some of the longer material that you've put out in a long time, you've been more song oriented lately.

FF: Oh sure, it's the longest stuff I've done since "Ruins" actually, which is on the second Henry Cow record back in '74. I have written long pieces since then, but they all seem to end up not being performed for one reason or another, most of the time it being because I'm too chicken to go through with it. I really reacted against what I felt was my own pretentiousness in feeling that I could be a composer in that way. I had a lot of conflict about it when I was writing these big, epic pieces. I would finally look at them and say "What is this shit? Who do I think I am?" Especially in the context in what I took to be bullshit like what Yes and Emerson, Lake, and Palmer, all those people who I had always hated, were doing. I didn't want to be associated with that world at all. So I stuck to song form for a really long time. I guess the point is, though, if you're commissioned to write a forty minute piece, you don't really have much choice.

TB: It seems like the only thing which really

THE TECHNOLOGY OF TEARS

contains any song-type stuff is the coda to "Jigsaw".

FF: Which I'm sure you've observed is just the same as the ending, but with a melody on top. The first part of "The Technology of Tears" was a very painful process. I had thought at that time, in my naivete, that I was just going to present the tape to the choreographer and then I was going to go on and do the next part. So I gave her the piece, and she had all kind of criticisms of it, of its length, of the way the saxophone was used, all kinds of things which didn't fit into her plans of what she had wanted. And I was writing for them, not for me, so I had to accommodate them, and at the same time keep my own spirit in the music. And that's how we started to work together, and in the beginning it was a very difficult process for me because I wasn't used to doing that kind of work. It was also difficult for her because she wasn't getting what she thought she would get. So after we had done the first part and finally it had come out alright and we were happy with it, we had to do "Jigsaw" before we did the next two parts. And the way "Jigsaw" was written was a very strong reaction against the way that I wrote "Sadness". I decided that I was going to write everything and record everything in tiny increments. The whole piece is made up of little bits of tape, which I then selected from and mixed down and edited together, I knew I'd be doing a lot of editing anyway, after what had happened with the first part. We could edit it an infinite number of ways, and it'd be easy to juggle things around. So I had a kind of a key structure and a rhythm structure and then I went from there.

TB: It sounds a little bit like the mix and match stuff John Zorn's doing, except it's more continuous.

FF: In his case, he would take opposite kinds of things. In my case, I was trying to make something as seamless as possible at the same time it would be made of fragments. I liked the idea of having a music with an even surface, so you feel the surface going by, but under the surface there's all kinds of threatening little things going on which are changing all the time. And "Jigsaw" has that element of a very smooth, minimal music aspect, which goes by without too much pain, but underneath it I'm doing things like recording myself hitting myself. Actually, a lot of the rhythm track is made by me banging my hands on my chest and sending it through a harmonizer, and so on and so forth. To return to your original question, we did "Jigsaw" and edited it together and the last part had this trombone melody, which is now the "Jigsaw" coda. And when we heard the whole piece back with the melody, it seemed to be way too pretty and optimistic for the feeling of all the rest of the music and what the choreography was doing. So I remixed the ending, without the trombone melody, in a kind of heavy way, to fit with everything else, but I liked the melody so much that I felt like I should put it on the record, just as an addition.

TB: "Propaganda", on the other hand, seems to have a lot of contrast between the little segments.

FF: Well, as I said earlier on, working for theatre is such a totally different music experience from working for dance. With dance you're working with

rhythm in a more obvious way and with continuity. If you write for theatre, it's very unlikely you're going to be writing anything very long. Basically the music's primary function is to link scenes, to give actors time to change, or get the set changed, and so on. But also, in this case, because it wasn't such a traditional theatre piece, I was also using it more in a film music sense of identifying characters with certain kinds of themes, so the music would fade in and out to punctuate a theme that was going on, involving certain characters. So there maybe five or six different themes in the theatre music and they can recur. Of course, the actual music that I did was probably three times longer than what's on the record. What I put on the record I guess you'd call it the highlights, or a condensation of what the work actually was.

TB: What's the general idea in the piece?

FF: It was kind of a complicated concept. It was somehow trying to make a connection between a Jacobean revenge tragedy, which you may not be familiar with, but it's a kind of a play where everybody ends up killing each other and falling over in the end, poisoned, or stabbed, which is, in a way, funny, but also if you read it in its historical context has a lot to do with the relations of power and the relations of people in a power context. And the director, Matthew Macguire, was trying to use revenge tragedy and set it against various different aspects of how propaganda is used now. So there are references throughout to American intervention in Central America for example, or certain kinds of TV programs, especially TV news and the way propaganda is used on TV news. So you're jumping in and out of a lot of different kind of contexts all the time, it's quite a complicated work.

TB: At least, once or twice, there's little snippets of other recordings, a little bit of Christian Marclay, it sounded like.

FF: Yeah, well there's a lot more in the actual play, but I had to restrict what I could put on the record, because a lot of that stuff I actually bought from the Muzak corporation. The Muzak I couldn't really use on the record because it's all copyrighted. They allow you to use it in performance. It was funny to get actual muzak, and then screw it up by editing it with other things. And we also used real radio and TV interspersed with the other material.

TB: It seems like a lot of musicians are getting into recycling now. Do you think there's a reason behind that?

FF: Recycling has been a kind of current in contemporary music back through the 20's and 30's. If you go back to the futurist music or *Musique Concrete* that's really what it was all about. And then it was kind of abandoned or forgotten about for a while. And then, about ten or fifteen years ago, you started to hear it coming in a lot more to the kind of things rock musicians were doing. I think the only major revolutionary change has been the final arrival of the sampler. In many ways the kind of things you can do with a sampler were already being done, just by other means. We used to do in the Art Bears, for example, we used to sample things by using the noise gate by triggering a vacuum cleaners with snare drums and so on,

which is the kind of thing you can do with a sampler much more quickly and easily. What you have with sampler is the possibility to steal anything from anybody, anytime.

TB: There have been some lawsuits about that recently.

FF: Well it's a very complicated ethical question, because all musicians have always stolen, it's just that the time periods have been longer. I mean if I sat in a room with a Fender Strat, a mass produced instrument, played by Jimi Hendrix, and used the same amp as he did, and listened to all his records and eventually can do a very good imitation of Jimi Hendrix, people aren't going to say that I'm stealing, they'll say I'm influenced. If on the other hand, I go to a record, and take his guitar sound and stick it into a keyboard and start playing a keyboard that sounds like Jimi Hendrix, in a way it's not all that different. It's just the direct plundering aspect of it, and the speed with which it's done. But I don't know whether in the end it's that much different, and I certainly don't think that there's anything much anyone can do about it, it's far too late. There are people who are using them to steal everything right, left, and center. It's gotten to the point where some guys in Hollywood can patch in the sound of a symphony orchestra and you can't tell the difference, and it's much cheaper for the film companies to use them than to pay the orchestra thirty two grand an hour. So it's a fact of musical life, and the ethics are very complicated, but in the hands of creative musicians there's a lot of things happening. And as long as it's not just imitating the source but creating something new from the source I think it's okay. I don't know whether in the end I really think it's okay, but I think that's why there's so much recycling going on, because the technological means are now available for anybody to use very easily. And it's a very seductive process, like most

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JUDGEMENT OF FREEDOM,

High accolades and lavish praise often overestimate or exaggerate the actual impact of a jazz musician: there has long been a plenitude of great musical talent, but an accompanying paucity of original ideas and creativity as well. Having said this, there is arguably no one alive today has done more to expand the musical boundaries and possibilities of jazz than multi-instrumentalist Ornette Coleman. This is not myth, it is fact. Some critics at first dismissed his early free efforts as just "so much noise" (*Something Else* and *Free Jazz* both received initially mixed reviews); however, the weight of his sheer originality, technique, and devotion to the new sound which would later be labelled 'harmolodic' eventually convinced any and all doubters over the next decade.

Since then Coleman's creativity has never waned and his sound has undergone continuous evolution, to which his incredibly varied and unrelentingly excellent discography will attest. Many critics may disagree on the comparative brilliance of a particular Ornette record, but ask them to compare it to anything else on the jazz market and most will say that out of the dozens of records he has made, not even one of his releases has been even mediocre. No other musician can make such a claim. Today both *Something* and *Free* are universally hailed as landmark, watershed lps, marking the beginning of what remains the most vital and creative new expression in jazz, that of Free. And yet, those two records are not generally considered to be even among his best work, which came and continues to come, in the later years. WHPK's Rick Senger spoke to Ornette via telephone before his prime time concert at Mandel Hall last April 22, 1988.

RS: You started in Fort Worth. Having grown up there, it must have been great to return for the opening of the *Caravan of Dreams* in '83. How did that come about?

OC: Well, somehow the organizers found out I was from Fort Worth and when they met with me in New York and asked me whether I'd like open it, I responded by asking if I could play my symphony in my hometown. They made it possible for me to do that, and that's how it started. It was a lot of fun.

RS: What is the *Caravan of Dreams* like?

OC: It's a cultural center. It's a very unique place. And it's getting very big.

RS: I've read some things about you, you can tell me if they're true. One of your biggest influences was Red Connor?

OC: Yeah. When I was in High School, I saw a gentleman get up and play a saxophone solo, and I thought he was very, very good. His name was Thomas Connor, nicknamed Red Connor. He was very talented.

RS: Not a famous saxophonist in jazz history.

OC: No, because he was as they say a 'home town' person. He never got the chance to make a name.

RS: You've been cited as saying "I began where Charlie Parker stopped".

OC: I don't know if I said that. When I had to learn the bebop category, I found that I had earned the right to play what I call 'harmolodics'. I liked Charlie Parker. I liked a person from my hometown named Ben Martin. I liked a lot of saxophone players. Not

only saxophone players, I liked a lot of good musicians.

RS: Harmolodics is an important term for your music. On your '77 *Dancing in Your Head* album, you actually define it in your liner notes. How did that philosophy come about?

OC: Well, in jazz music, there was always someone who would give you what is called the "head" of the song and they would give you the changes and you would follow these changes and some people could tell how well you could play by the way you followed the changes. But then after hearing that for twenty years, I found out that everyone was following the same change but no one was going anywhere, including myself! I had always wanted to play naturally, the way Eastern people play non-tempered music. They don't have to follow the change, they follow their own music. So after going through the swing, dixieland, and bebop era, I vowed that I would try and take a chance and play what I now call Harmolodic. I found that when I could teach it to others to play as well, it was just as enjoyable to do as it was to follow a map.

RS: You emphasized the melodic aspects and got rid of chord changes in the late fifties and early sixties when that was a pretty revolutionary thing to be doing.

OC: Yeah. Well, actually I didn't get rid of chord changes: I just didn't have to follow the map to make a mistake.

RS: Right. You were quoted as once saying "it was when I found out that I could make mistakes that I was onto something".

OC: Yup, that's true, too.

RS: What does that mean, exactly?

OC: For instance, if someone gives you a set of changes and you don't play them then they tell you you've got to go back and learn them. In Harmolodics, most people think that you just take a horn and play anything off the top of your head and don't have to play any changes. Well, western music wasn't designed to be played that way because no one instrument is designed to play all the music. But most western instruments can play a unison melody. When I realized that unison melody also has its own rules whether you follow the map or not, I realized that harmolodic could be as rewarding as any other form of musical expression.

RS: It seems amazing that you would have discovered and realized this philosophy on your own considering your Fort Worth background; you played in R+B bands, you were once in a carnival...

OC: Well, I think that's true. Do you play yourself?

RS: I play piano passably, electric guitar mediocrally, & saxophone horribly.

OC: I was just talking to someone and I was telling them that if you want to start in Harmolodic, you write down C, E, G, B, E flat, G flat, B flat, D flat, D, F, A flat, and A. How many notes do you have?

RS: [long pause as Rick struggles to count to twelve] Twelve?

OC: How many notes repeated?

RS: Umm...none?

OC: Well, that's Harmolodics. When you play that on the piano, you'll see.

RS: You don't use piano very much anymore.

OC: Well, I use it once in a while. It's not that I don't use piano anymore, it's just that the piano seems to always be out of tune. The guitar is easier to tune and it's more economical. I also now have a tabla player named Bado Roy. If it were left to me, I would have a harmolodic orchestra of about eighty five pieces.

RS: One of the songs on *In All Languages* seems to have a full orchestra at the beginning and the

ORNETTE

very end.

OC: You know what, that's not an orchestra. That's Denardo and his sampling. Sounds like an orchestra, doesn't it? He's amazing.

RS: On *In All Languages*, you have the original quartet on one record and prime time on the other: these are obviously very different groups, and yet both discs have musical similarities. Was this a conscious effort to demonstrate the universality of music?

OC: Yes. That's the point I was trying to get across. If you took the name of the style away from any music, it would just sound like music.

RS: You're quoted on the back of Jackie Maclean's *New and Old Gospel* as saying "Why I like music is because it's like walking down the street naked".

OC: That's not a bad description of music.

RS: How do you mean?

OC: Adam and Eve were the only people who could walk around naked. There was no one there to see them. But in the western world or any world, naked only means your most revealing naturalness. Everyone was born into the world naked, and in their most natural state. Good music to me is natural music. I think what I was trying to say is if you took away the category, the ethnical image, and the intellectual philosophy from sound, it is still music. And there is no bad music, just bad musicians.

RS: "Lonely Woman" is perhaps the most covered of your compositions, by musicians bad and good alike. How did it come about?

OC: Well, actually, I was working at Bullocks as a stock clerk and I was on my lunch period one day. I was walking down the street and I came upon a gallery. On display in this gallery was a painting of a very bourgeois, wealthy looking white lady sitting there with the most sad and lonely expression; tears on her face, and she had everything that anyone could ever want. I said 'it's amazing, but I can relate to this painting'. I went home and wrote the song.

RS: You made your break from conventional bebop into free in the late nineteen fifties-early nineteen sixties. But I've read that just as you were finally gaining critical acceptance and respect, you decided to take a sabbatical away from

FREEDOM OF JUDGEMENT

performance in order to learn trumpet and violin. Why?

OC: Actually, I had just produced my first concert at town hall. The night I produced it, there was a snow storm, taxi strike, paper strike, and subway strike. All those things happened to me, so I didn't feel very successful as an entrepreneur. The sabbatical came about because of bad business experiences. Business has a lot to do with personalities and motives. If your motive is just music, you can't hide

COLEMAN

that.

RS: You decided to concentrate your motives on music.

OC: I had gotten a Guggenheim fellowship and had started writing my symphony, but the "guys" didn't really take me seriously because they thought I was a jazz musician and wasn't familiar with the classical instrumentation. I didn't want to have that kind of relationship with something I was writing, so I decided to familiarize myself beyond merely knowing how to write for the symphony so that I had experience with the actual instruments involved. Basically the instrumentation of Western music is brass, woodwinds, strings, and percussion. Since I was already playing a woodwind instrument, I decided to learn a brass and a string instrument. That way, I could back up the things I was writing.

RS: And ever since, your style has been constantly evolving.

OC: I have a record with Jerry Garcia and primetime coming out in May called *Virgin Beauty*.

RS: How did you happen to choose Jerry Garcia?

OC: Denardo took me to one of their [The Grateful Dead] concerts and I liked their sound: they play very beautifully and use two drummers, too.

RS: Garcia is a stylistically different guitarist from your usual primetime members, but then, you also played with Pat Metheny on *Song X*.

OC: Pat is one of the most professional individuals I've ever worked with and is well liked by everyone. I love him as a person and as a musician. He's in a category by himself.

RS: And you've worked with bassists as varied as Charlie Haden and Jamaaladeen Tacuma.

OC: Well, I have a young kid who just turned twenty who is working with me now named Chris Walker, and Albert McDowell, too. They're unbelievable. To me I'm more interested in having the players trying to achieve what they would play if they were playing in their own band. Once you give a person that right, they grow very fast.

RS: And Charlie Haden is very different from the primetime bassists you've mentioned, yet he works equally well with you.

OC: Yes. I've always said that ideas create styles; styles don't create ideas.

RS: Any other projects going on besides the new record?

OC: Well, I'm going to Europe at the end of May to play my symphony with the Royal Philharmonic.

RS: Cool. Have you ever done that before?

OC: We played "Skies Of America" [from a '72 release, Columbia] with the Verona Symphony last year and it was very successful.

RS: How would you compare European and American audiences? Are the Europeans more receptive to jazz?

OC: No, I don't think so. I think America is the, what is it, the "Atlantis of Today". It's the territory where all the people who are interested in creativeness, ethicalness, spiritualness, and real-estateness seem to be agreeing upon the same privileges. In Europe, you have Italian, French, German, Swedish, etc., whereas in America, you have only one language. It's much easier for a person to say the same thing about what you're doing than when you hear several different concepts of the same thing in a different language.

RS: You've talked about writing about the philosophy of *Harmolodics* at some point: what's the status of that work?

OC: Actually, I've been trying to work on finishing a book I have coming out called *The Harmolodic Theory Book*. I haven't had much time to work on it, but I've got to because everyone keeps saying "I don't believe you've written this book" but I really have.

RS: Obviously you're not slowing down now, but if you wanted to be remembered for something, what would it be?

OC: You've got to think about who's doing the remembering. I'm not very concerned with who's doing the remembering, I'd rather be concerned with who does the discovering. It seems when you pass, people don't remember you too much anyway.

RS: I think you'll be remembered.

OC: Well, maybe. But remembering is a cruel word when it comes to the business of art. I guess it has something to do with knowing what happened in the past. I'm sure in Mozart's and Beethoven's time, there were lots of people who were very good that we don't know about. I guess they just had good press agents.

RS: I've got a 1959 quote from you at about the time your first free album was released: "I think one day music will be a lot freer. The pattern for a tune for instance will be forgotten and the tune itself will be the pattern. It won't have to be forced into conventional patterns."

OC: I think that is true. That is what has come about. People are writing free songs not only in the instrumental format but also in the word format.

RS: Who do you listen to?

OC: Anybody...

RS: Anybody that's good?

OC: Not anybody that's good, but anybody period. I don't discriminate or get judgemental about something. I just listen, and if it has some quality in it, then has. If it doesn't, it doesn't. But I listen.

RS: Still, I'm really curious about what you do listen to. What you really like.

OC: Well, I'll tell you what, I've been working with a Japanese singer named Mariokabu who has a beautiful voice. I like Joan Sutherland. She has a

record out called *The Art of the Primadonna* which I really like. I like Glant Gloo, I like Bud Powell, I like Charlie Parker, I like Johnny Hodges, I like Sarah Vaughn. I like what everyone else likes, I guess.



computer things, like having a toy.

TB: Of the four people who also appear on this record I think a lot of people would be interested in Tenko, because not many people have heard of her, but she's very striking in this piece.

FF: She's just been in the States doing some solo work, and she just performed at this big women's music festival in Montreal and she was doing some performances in New York last week. She's certainly an extraordinary performer. Obviously I'm biased, in this case. I think she's one of the most interesting vocalists around at the moment in this field, because she's not self consciously experimental. One thing I find about her singing, is that there are a lot of people that are singing that are extraordinary vocal acrobats, who can do a lot of things with their voices in an experimental way. But what she has is that when she stands in front of you on stage there's a kind of immediate transmission of passion, which is very stunning and powerful. And even in the context of "The Technology of Tears" as soon as her voice is there, it completely transforms the emotional energy of the music, just because of the feeling in it.

TB: How did you meet her?

FF: Originally she came to a gig I did with Derek Bailey in New York years ago. Then I received her record from a friend of mine in Japan, with her first band called the Polka-Dot Fire Brigade. They were a five piece rock and roll band. They're kind of notorious in Japan, they're the first all woman band of that particular aggressive type, because they're not in the least bit coy, and they tend to scare the shit out of their audiences, especially the men. I got this record, and another friend of mine gave me

another record of the Honeymoons, which is her vocal duo group. And I had no idea that it was actually the same person, because all the sleeve notes were Japanese, and the covers weren't really that easy to see the figures on them. The Honeymoons opened for Skeleton Crew in Japan on a couple of gigs, and then in talking to her afterwards I discovered that she was actually the same Tenko who was on the Polka-Dot Fire Brigade record which I had also really liked, so I became more interested in finding out more of what was going on. And in the end she was having a lot of trouble mixing the second Fire Brigade record, she had mixed it twice with different engineers and wasn't getting anywhere, partly because Japanese engineers are extremely conservative and afraid to let things go into the red and do other things if you want to make it sound like rock and roll. So I ended up going over there and remixing it for the third time and I've been working with her pretty much ever since.

TB: Have you got a twin brother? How do you find time to collaborate with so many people?

FF: Well records don't take very long. There's a lot of mythology about it. Yes I've been on a lot of records, but if you actually know what that involves, it's sounds a lot more impressive than it actually is. I can say "Hey, I've worked with Laurie Anderson" when in point of fact it means that at about nine o'clock in the morning I get this call saying "We're having a problem with this Synclavier part, can you come and play the keyboards?" So I go down there and they run the music by me and I play the keyboard part in a couple of takes and then I get a check and leave. The whole thing takes about forty five minutes. It's very easy, everybody's really friendly, very happy about it, and I've played with

Laurie Anderson. I haven't really played with Laurie Anderson, I haven't really done anything, but that's a lot of what recording's all about, it's very professional. There's other kinds of recordings also, like when I played with the Violent Femmes. I was playing in Milwaukee, and they came to the gig and they said "How do you feel about playing on our record?" and I said "Sure." So the next day I've got a day off from the tour and I go down there and spend a couple of hours doing some overdubs. That's all it is, it's not like I'm spending a month of my time.

TB: Isn't working with John Zorn a little bit more involved than that?

FF: Well a lot of the people I record with there is a lot more involved. Anyway I'm very happy that I have the facility that I can go into the studio for a half an hour and produce the result that's required. My relationship with someone like John Zorn it's a lot more deep, because we've been working together for about ten years now. In fact we have a fairly regular improvising duo that's just about my favorite performing vehicle at the moment. And I'm going to be the bass player in his new band, so when I record with him it's much more slow and complicated. The last thing I did with him was last week he was producing a record by shamisen player from Japan called Michi Iriato, who he recorded a duo album with a few years back. On this record he's been inviting a lot of people in and trying different things out, and it's not a question of just going in there and putting an overdub on an existing track. In fact, it's 'Sato and me and Bill Frisell, and we're trying a lot of different kinds of things. It's a lot more involved, sometimes things work and sometimes they don't. It's a much more collaborative process.

ROLLINS FROM PAGE 6

Colorado, through the desert in Arizona and New Mexico, it's just incredible. Lots of room, and in the winter time there's no on it. It's the only time I get to really relax. On a plane I'm just uptight, it's like I'm keeping the wing glued on by staring at it, I get too wound up. And these days I'm a very busy person so I really don't get enough reading done, so I can't wait for the Boston train, because I just got some great books.

I just got this book called *Proud Beggars* by a guy named Albert Cossari. He's an Egyptian writer, this book's on Black Sparrow. I've got one of his books, which I saw in a used book store once, apparently his books are really rare, anyways, I pulled it out and it had this great write-up by Henry Miller. So I thought "A dollar? I'm buying it," 'cause what the hell, Miller he's the man. So I was in Denver the other day with this guy who's also a book collector. And he says to me "Have you ever read this guy?", and he pulls down *God's Lonely Men*, by Cossari. So today I went to Book Row or whatever it is, and I found Cossari. I bought a J. M. Coetzee book today, *Life and Times of Michael Kay*, I've already read it, but I bought it for a girl. I bought *Song of the Silent Snow* by Hubert Selby, for the same girl. I buy books for girls a lot, guys to but I like girls better. I buy books for a lot of people.

SW: Do you find it hard to switch gears when you're writing lyrics versus journal entries?

HR: No, what I usually do when I write these days, I've got three different note books. I've got this one book, then my scrap book which is for when I come up with ideas in the middle of the night, then I've got this, which is phone messages and also other ideas. A lot of the times when I'm writing in the journal I'll come up with an idea for something else, so I'll write with a pad on each leg and I'll just go from one to the other, sometimes I've got three. That's the way I think, I free-associate a lot of stuff.

SW: Taking your readings in pieces you get a fragmented picture, but taking them as a whole is confusing. I can't tell when I'm supposed to laugh and when I'm supposed to cry.

HR: Good. It's good for you, a little push and pull. I do a lot of humor, but my humor's barbed. It's laughs with thought in mind, I don't like laughs like Eddie Murphy. I like laughs that take you somewhere, like Lenny Bruce. As far as this talking schtick or whatever it is I'm doing, if I had a role model, it's Lenny Bruce. Just for the fact that he went up there and really kicked it live. He just went up there and just went. And I aspire to those balls, to go up in front of an audience and just release. He was funny, but he also made you think. He never did anything that was just a laugh for laugh's sake. And that's what I like too, like a spoonful of sugar makes the napalm go down.

SW: So one of your concepts, your goals is to make people think about those topics, to create questions in people's minds?

HR: No, don't get me wrong but I do a lot of this just

for me, I'm not an entertainer. I've got a concept of what I'm going to do tonight. Last night was pretty much off paper, before that in Fargo was no paper I just went, tonight I'll do a little of both. It depends on the crowd. Last night was a very hard show, the crowd was talking and their fidgeting around, it's a very hard room. It was the funk night across the way, and every time someone would open the door it's this mega-blast of the funk, also there's this steady hum at the bar, I just can't concentrate. Her, I've done two shows, and the crowds have been really cool.

MF: Could you give us the whole picture on your benefit record?

HR: Yeah sure, a while ago I came up with the idea to start my own record label, which is totally dedicated to raising money for charities of my choice. The name of that label is High on War. Like I said, all the proceeds from High on War are going to benefits: battered women and battered children are my main thing. And the first single is finished, it's been recorded. It's called, well it's not called nothin', me and this guy Tom Trocoli were sitting in my room and we recorded it. There are three songs, vocal and acoustic, and there's some flat notes in there, but it's got a lot of soul. And my manager's going through the assorted paperwork so I can release it legally. As soon as you want to release a record and give money to people, the local authorities get very suspicious. It's not easy, we've been going back and forth for three weeks trying to give money away, it's really discouraging, but we're still trying.

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ONLY MEN IN HISTORY TURNED AWAY AT THE GATE OF DISNEY WORLD

Madison, Wisconsin's Killdozer have brought new meaning to the phrase "slow grind". Their painfully slow, grungy sound has turned the once adhered to loud-and-fast ideology into an anachronism and breathed new life into a number of old classics such as "Cinnamon Girl" and "Sweet Home, Alabama". Although they've never embarked on a "nationwide tour" they're easily among the most popular acts on the now Chicago-based Touch and Go label. Their last two efforts, *Little Baby Buntin'* and *Burl*, topped both WHPK's playlists and national college charts. WHPK's Carl Falstrom spoke with the band on their last visit to Chicago, in February.

Carl: When did you get together?

Bill: Well, I've known Dan for a number of years now. We started back in '82.

Dan: No, I've known you longer than that.

Michael: We started in the year of '83, the coldest year we've ever known.

C: So you just knew each other...

B: I have known Dan for quite a long time, he's my brother. I've known him since I was two.

D: I've known Mike for quite a while, since we were

in high school together.

M: When Dan and I went and saw the Boys from Illinois warm up Kansas, and we hated the Boys from Illinois because we thought they were punk. That was in '78.

C: I've never heard of the Boys from Illinois. So you guys were born and bred in Madison?

M: Nope.

B: Mike, where'd you grow up?

D: Yeah, where'd you grow up Mike?

M: I don't know, where should I say this time?

B: Minneapolis.

M: The raspberry capital of the world.

C: So all your dads got transfered to Madison?

M: Nope.

B: We're college boys.

D: We went to school there.

M: College boys. Can't you tell by our cleverness?

B: Our subtle wit?

M: We're all unemployed teachers.

B: I'm just purely unemployed at this moment.

C: You guys don't have any jobs, you're just trying to make it on your music?

B: No, I usually work construction when I'm not

rockin' and rollin'. But there's not much work in January and February for some strange reason.

M: I drive a truck.

D: I sell vinyl, records I mean. I mean I work in a record store.

M: Excuse me? I thought you meant like roof repair or something, you know cars.

C: So tell me about Madison, what's it like? Any clubs?

M: You've never been there?

B: Nestled between two lakes is the wonderful community of Madison, Wisconsin.

M: It's 170,000 hippies.

C: So you've got a devoted local following among them?

M: Not as much as the Green Acres reruns.

D: We used to have quite a rabid following.

B: But they all died... of rabies.

C: What sort of stuff did you listen to when you were growing up?

B: What do you think we listened too?

C: I don't know, Zeppelin, that sort of stuff.

M: Growing up?

C: Yeah, what influenced you, during your formative years?

M: What's he talking about?

B: Like when you were 12, what's the first record you bought?

M: "A Boy Named Sue", by Johnny Cash. It was a long time, really, before I bought any records. I stole a lot. Got caught stealing them from a JC Penney's once.

C: Are you guys on tour now?

B: We're kind of on a continuous tour, but not in one continuous stretch.

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M: Our tours involve Friday and Saturday nights, and then we go home.

D: Life is a tour.

B: Ooooh, that's deep.

C: So Albini's a fan of yours, he arranged it the last time you came to town and all.

D: He saw us play for the first time. The first time we played out of town. We saw Big Black when they used to suck so bad I couldn't believe it.

C: When was that?

D: Years ago.

M: '80, back when they had some jerk from Naked Raygun playing the bass. Maybe he's a nice man, but he...I'd say the best thing that happened to Big Black was getting a new bass player. I don't like Raygun.

C: Who do you listen to these days?

M: Inglebert Humpertink.

B: No, who do you listen to?

C: What's the last record you bought?

B: The last record I bought?

M: I bought a Mekons record.

D: I just take them home from work.

B: I don't own a record player.

M: The last record I bought was the new Aerosmith record.

B: I just listen to the radio.

D: We've got the new Aerosmith too, "Dude Looks Like a Lady".

M: It's not as good as "Tunnel of Mirrors".

B: I like the stuff on our label, but we don't have to buy that.

M: I would have bought the Laughing Hyenas, if I didn't get it for free.

C: That's a really great record, I kind of thought of you guys when I heard it. Do you kind of feel like you've started something?

B: How do you know if you've started something?

C: Did you have any vinyl out before the Touch and Go deal?

M: We've got a record out, Dan what's it called?

D: I can't remember.

M: Intellectuals Are the Shoeshine Boys of the Ruling Elite. We put it out on the famous Bone-Air label.

C: Can we still get copies of that?

B: For about thirty bucks.

M: We made a thousand of them.

B: I'm not saying that people that collect records are pinheads, but they'll buy those records for twenty dollars now.

C: Think about Albini, what Lungs must be going for?

B: How much?

C: I don't know, I've never seen it.

M: And hell, that's a terrible record.

C: I wouldn't say so.

M: I would.

C: But that Headache thing, they're asking fifty or sixty for those things now.

B: Shit. Oh, excuse me, but being unemployed, money is a precious thing to me, so maybe I'll just sell it.

M: You ever pull out that photo, just to curb your appetite?

C: Yeah, but compare it to some of the movies you can see these days.

B: Like Faces of Death. Isn't that a fake movie.

C: I haven't seen it, but I've heard of people becoming vegetarians afterwards.



B: Well I was a vegetarian before I saw it, but it just reaffirmed my convictions.

M: Why are you a vegetarian Bill?

D: Anti-vivisectionist?

B: You got me, you really pinned me down there.

M: You've got leather boots though, Bill.

B: It's okay, somebody else killed it.

C: Are you really anti-vivisectionist, militant and all that?

Bundy: Like PETA?

B: I'm not a pedophile, what are you talking about?

D: How about using pigs for bacon, is that vivisection?

B: So Mike, you didn't like "Lungs", huh? What'd you think of "Atomizer"?

M: I liked Atomizer. I like everything they have with Dave Riley on it. It's all good stuff, especially "Il Duce". Easily some of the finest work I've ever heard. We're very happy that you have a Wisconsin-brewed beer here.

C: Yeah, this is Chicago's beer. I haven't figured out why so many people here drink Old Style.

M: It's good!

C: This isn't good.

B: Okay that's it. Turn off the tape.

Bundy: I'd rather drink Leinenkugel's.

B: That's another good beer.

D: Yeah, but Old Style's a real mellow drunk. Drink about twelve and you've got a real laid-back mellow drunk.

C: I wanted to ask about your covers too. How do you select them. Is it just stuff you liked when you were younger?

D: Liked it when we were young, and now that we're older too.

B: There's no reason to write your own songs when there's so many classics out there.

C: Yeah, you do some really great songs.

M: You wouldn't believe the songs we've done that you never get to hear.

B: Oh, some of them really stink.

M: Recently we tried "It's Not Unusual" by Tom Jones, and "I, Calypso" by John Denver. The problem with that song is that it's a terrible song.

C: Are these ever going to make it to shows?

M: No.

D: Well, we did "It's Not Unusual" once. It sort of soiled our whole set.

B: We shitted ourselves.

C: Some of your covers seem really slow. Do you slow them down?

B: No, we just drink ourselves into unconsciousness and then record them. It's just hard to keep the rhythm going when it's really fast.

M: Fast music makes me nervous.

C: Most of the songs are pretty slow to begin with, like "I Am, I Said" is about the same speed when you guys do it as it was when Neil Diamond did.

M: Well, we made a mistake then.

B: No we didn't.

M: No, we knew what we were doing the whole time.

C: Do you have any European fans? It seems like the Britishers would like you guys alot.

M: Is that an insult?

B: You mean grease-eaters?

D: Yeah, you talkin' about Depeche Mode?

B: Haircut 1000?

C: No, not at all. I mean, they're going nuts over Pussy Galore.

B: Who wouldn't?

M: All I know is the day the French start to be hip on us, that's the day I quit.

B: That's when we change our name to Jerry Lewis.

C: Yeah, there was a French band called Killdozer.

D: We've got their record. It's terrible.

B: It sucks.

D: They try and do James Brown sort of stuff.

B: But seriously, have you heard any French rock and roll that's good?

C: Plastic Bertrand...

B: What the fuck's that?

M: Have you ever seen a good French movie? Have you ever even heard good French classical composer? You know why they have all those fancy, rich sauces? Because the meat they had to eat is horsemeat.

D: Tell them about the sparrows.

B: Yeah, have you ever seen them eat the little birds? I saw this on "Sixty Minutes" once. They take this cloth bag and put it over their head. Then they take these birds, they've got all the feathers picked off and pop it into their mouth, beaks, feet, and all. They eat the whole thing, then they take the beaks and feet out, and they're done.

Bundy: What's the bag for?

B: So they can experience it entirely.

D: So they can get the full sensation of the little bird.

CHICAGO'S OWN: SPECIAL CONSENSUS



The Special Consensus is a band that seem to be finally getting what they deserve. Any group of musicians that play banjo, acoustic guitar, mandolin, and stand-up bass will probably be called a bluegrass band whether they want the label or not, and the Special Consensus is no exception. Bluegrass audiences have proven receptive to the band, as shown by the success of their last album, "Freight Train Boogie," even though, as the title implies, parts of the album are much more like jazz, swing, or contemporary country than traditional, hard-driving bluegrass. The Special Consensus are hard to place in a well defined category, and this is a mixed blessing. Bluegrass purists might be disappointed to find that they don't sound exactly like the music being made 40 years ago in the South, but they have a much greater chance to appeal to urban audiences, who might be used to jazz or classical music, and ready to hear another kind of acoustic music presented as an alternative. Pigeonholes aside, the Special Consensus are creative, energetic musicians, who deserve increasing recognition for their talent and hard work. WHPK's Neal Loevinger recently travelled up to Evanston to speak with founding band member and banjo player Greg Cahill about how the Special Consensus got its start, and where the Special C is headed:

NL: One of the first things I'd like to ask is how a bluegrass band got formed just north of Chicago, where I think it's fair to say that there is no

bluegrass scene, or at least very small scene.

GC: The interesting thing about that is that the original formation was actually called "The Cook County Doo-Dah Boys," and was in fact an aggregation primarily composed of University of Chicago graduate students. It was not bluegrass, although I did play the banjo, and the bass player, who had graduated from the U of C in Biology, and who had played harmonica on the South Side in a lot of blues clubs, with some of the old blues guys, he wanted to play the bass, he was a stand-up bass player. So the instrumentation was odd; we also had an electric guitar player, a drummer, who also played harmonica, and a guitar player who was completing his dissertation in psychology. This was in about '74. The thing to do then was to drive into the city from the suburbs, because there was virtually no music in the suburbs, and come to the Lincoln Avenue club scene to hear music. This was before Holstein's; this is when there was the Clearwater Saloon, on Lincoln Ave, which was really a divey place, a beer joint, in a not-very-good neighborhood, in the 3400 block of North Lincoln Ave. People would just go nuts for bluegrass music, and I can remember that people would wait in line outside literally 2 blocks down the street. They would not charge an admission; they would pass the pitcher for the musicians, and that's how they paid the bands. And honestly, we probably still have never, in this area, made as much money per night as we used to make there, in '77-78, with them

passing the pitcher.

NL: Tell me about the new album you're going to be doing. I heard you say that you're going to Nashville- that seems like a good step forward.

GC: It is. We're still trying different things. On each album we usually try to do a couple of really traditional songs or tunes, as well as some original tunes, and usually something a little different too, that we didn't do on the last album. This album will be consistent with that. One of the gospel songs is a Sam Cooke song; nobody knew Sam Cooke, the old rhythm and blues "I've Been Working On The Chain Gang" Sam Cooke, wrote stuff like that. Robbie, our guitar player, came up with that song; we arranged it and made it bluegrass. The thing that's interesting about bluegrass music is that the masters are still around. Bill Monroe, although this is probably his last year of performing, is still around, as are the Osborne Brothers, or Jim & Jesse, or Ralph Stanley. That's something that doesn't happen in very many types of music these days; the creators are still involved in performing the music, and I think that's really exciting. We can all keep on learning from them, and they are being influenced by other types of music, and other types of media that weren't around when they first started out. All of which is to say that the music in general is becoming more sophisticated, including the more traditional style, and the Special Consensus is growing with the general growth in the music as a whole. We're definitely on the rise, and I hope that we keep growing and that the next album receives the airplay that the last one did. The "Freight Train Boogie" record got a lot of airplay, and that helped us all over.

NL: In your opinion, where and why does the Special Consensus fall along the spectrum of bluegrass music, from the real old-time style, bordering on traditional mountain music, to the slicker, more complicated music, bordering on what people call "New Acoustic?"

GC: I really don't know. I think we're more middle-of-the-road, shall we say, because we still do some of the real traditional stuff, and yet we do much more arranged material too, and we write our own tunes, which aren't really hard-core traditional. We've brought in some country songs, and songs from other genres, like old swing tunes. That was all part of the process of becoming more marketable, to survive. That's not to say that we're selling out, or doing stuff that we don't want to do- we like the music that we do. But if we play a club in town, which we do maybe once or twice a month, we won't draw that many people if we do just the real traditional stuff. We've tried, and observed how people respond to the different types of music. It's something that people just don't identify with very much, and that's understandable. The diversification of our music also came with our personnel changes; each new person brings in a new sound, and a new repertoire.

NL: Tell me about the different members of the band. Where are they coming from musically, what are they adding to the sound of the band? What have been some of their influences, and what's cooking in the band now because of them, things that might be different than things we've seen in the past?

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PURE HYPE: THE VINYL EDITION

By now, I'm sure all of you out there have heard that Steve Albini's going to be behind the board, producing the next hot slab of wax from Depeche Mode, in addition to having already produced an album on 4AD, that label which has produced such hard-hitting rock-and-rollers as The Cocteau Twins and Df Juz. It kind of makes you question the state of rock and roll in Chicago. Well, the album was by the Pixies, and it does have some loud, ringing guitar noises, and his new band Rape Man (with Rey Washam and David Wm. Sims, both formerly of Scratch Acid) did put on a show of ear melting proportions a few weeks ago, so all hope isn't lost. In fact, with the Effigies back together and a bevy of new independent labels cropping up all over town, things are looking pretty good.

Speaking of hard-hitting rock and roll, The Didjits recently put out their second piece of vinyl, *Hey Judester*, on Touch and Go. This is some pretty unrelenting music, so if you're not tall enough to ride the bumper cars at Great America, have heart problems, or epilepsy, best shy away from this one. Possibly one of the most obnoxious bands I've had the pleasure of seeing live, this album lived up fully to my expectations. But what do they sound like, you ask? Imagine taking one of your Bo Diddley or Chuck Berry albums and putting it on at the wrong speed. Not 45 mind you, but no less than 78 blistering RPM's. Then crank your stereo up to about eleven. Let's just say you're not likely to plop this baby down onto your stereo next time the wine and cheese set show up.

On the other hand, an album which will more likely find its way to your turntable on quiet evening is Algebra Suicide's first vinyl release, *The Secret Like Crazy*. WHPK alumnus Don Hedeker plays all the instruments, while Lydia Tomkiw recites her poetry. Since I don't claim to be an appreciator of poetry (I'd rather hear the likes of Bon Scott with my music) I'll let you decide about the vocals, those of you who listen to a lot of this sort of music probably will like them. The music on the other hand is a moody, atmospheric mix of keyboards and guitars which provides a pleasant sonic backdrop. If I could only get rid of the cheezy drum tracks that sound like they were programmed on a Mattel synsonix

drum machine. Nonetheless, the simple urgency of the tunes still comes through.

Hyde Park's own, Monica's Interval have also made their vinyl debut, with their self-titled lp. The band seems to have found a comfortable niche with their current style of pleasant sounding postpunk pop, a style which they serve up excellently on this disc. John Ross comes up with some good hooks in the self-conscious Britpop vein, as the music meanders through oft-travelled territory, leaving its mark with smooth production and strong melodies. For an initial effort, Monica's Interval comes off sounding surprisingly professional. Hopefully, with their new lineup, these folks will find the success they well deserve.

Another selection in the "pop" genre, this one more along power trio lines, is Material Issue's ep, on Landmind records, who have also released an ep of Chicago's garage favorites, Precious Wax Drippings. Some of you might remember Material Issue from when they played Alpha Delt last year, but were rudely interrupted numerous times by the frat's self-righteous DJ spinning Madonna and the like. With one notable exception, this is easily Chicago's finest home grown rock and roll since Green's debut lp.

That notable exception has to be Eleventh Dream Day, the best band kicking around town these days. I don't even know if many of you have even seen their second release, *Prairie School Freakout*, in the stores yet, we just received our copy yesterday, at the time of this writing. I thought their ep was really something else, but this album is great. It's filled with the same vocal harmonies, inspired guitar solos, solid songwriting, and a touch of slide guitar here and there to lend it some character. While the majors try and sell you bands like The Brandos and The Smithereens, Eleventh Dream Day define roots rock and roll. Without a doubt, one of this year's best as they kick out songs like "Through My Mouth" and "The Death of Albert C. Sampson", which you've probably seen live in the past few months. Buy this one, someday you'll be saying, "I listened to these guys when..."

New on Wax Trax! is "My Life With the Thrill Kill Kult", by The Thrill Kill Kult, who sound somewhat

like John Barry meets Wiseblood at a Ministry garage sale. This debut ep, attributed to two Wax Trax employees (one rumored to have formerly been in Ministry), is one of the most exciting dance records to come along in a while. It's filled with grunge, yet has more than enough beat to satisfy even the most finicky Smart Bar patron. Soon to be a mega-hit wherever toes are being tapped.

Also receiving a lot of play on club's turntables lately is Terminal White's latest: "Hamtramck". The band's added a few members and fleshed out the sound since their last one, "Slaughter Me". With that funky guitar riff and a backbeat going at 130 relentless bpm this one's hard to resist. Also on White Records is Long Pig from Straightjacketbazooka, offering accessible industrial music. The ep contains a remixed, rerecorded version of "Long Pig" from their demo cassette, as well as three other selections, which combine processed instrumentation and vocals, and found sounds with tribal rhythms. Although they're still available, since they were independently released, both of these were printed in fairly limited quantities, so don't expect to find them in record stores much longer.

Naked Raygun's finally found a new home, Caroline Records, so their latest lp, *Jettison*, is finally available. This one screams with the same intensity as *All Rise* and *Throb*, *Throb*, so get ready for those sing-a-long choruses. They don't venture too far from their tried and true formula, but when you've already got the wailing guitar, pulsating bass, and driving backbeat there isn't a whole more you can ask for. I'm just wondering when these guys are going to get their due and break it big on the national level.

From what I hear there's new vinyl coming out on Pravda, from The Service and the Slugs. George's Duty Free Goulash having been the Service's strongest effort yet, I've got high hopes for their new one. Also keep your eyes peeled for an upcoming single on Butt Rag Records, by Repulse Kava. For those of you who haven't had the opportunity to see these guys play yet and are wondering what they sound like let me just say their lineup consists of guitar, bass, drums and turntables (and what you might call slide guitar, on a few of their numbers), and, not being one to draw very good comparisons, drop a few names like The Minutemen, Sonic Youth, The Birthday Party, Scratch Acid; well, I'm sure you get the picture.

by Bundy K. Brown and Rick Wojcik
with portions borrowed from *The Vinyl Vortex* in the *Grey City Journal*, with the author's permission

C O N T I N U E D

GC: The newest member is Rob Fulks, the guitar player, and although he was raised in North Carolina, and his father was a bluegrass player—that's his father's guitar, that he uses now—he's been more influenced by country and rock music. He's a phenomenal guitar player, a great flatpicker, and a very good singer; we haven't had a flatpicker since 1979 or so. He also brings in different material from these other genres. We find that real interesting, and we can "bluegrass" it, making it more of a bluegrass tune, like the Sam Cooke song. Tim Wilson, the mandolin player, who joined the band a little over three years ago, grew up in

Michigan, where there's a huge concentration of bluegrass people. Tim comes from a more traditional background, and he's really knowledgeable about the old standards, as well as a lot of the country stuff that we play. Scotty Salak, the bass player, had been with some bands in Ohio, and when he joined the band, almost four years ago now, he was in a band in Wisconsin. He comes with a variety of experiences; I guess the Ohio folks were more traditional, and the Wisconsin folks were halfway between traditional and progressive. He brings that sort of feel, of being between traditional and progressive, into the band, especially with his bass playing. As for me, I'm spending time with the banjo as a musical instrument, not necessarily just as the bluegrass banjo.

NL: So what are the immediate or long term goals of the *Special Consensus*? Where do you see yourselves going?

GC: Well, I think we'll continue to grow collectively, as we have in the past, and musically, I hope we'll become more recognizable for our "band sound." We've also recently made a push to make sure we keep some traditional material in the repertoire; there was a tendency to start sliding from that, and getting into a more country-ish vein, or a swingy type vein, or whatever. The goals are, I guess, to be able to perform in the better venues; "better" meaning places that can draw a bigger audience, or a family-type audience, or a show-type atmosphere. To be able to perform in a place like that, and perform our own music, or at least music that we want to do.

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